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A program has been established at an integrated Louisville, Kentucky, junior high school to develop a sense of school and community pride among students and teachers. The formerly all-white district in which the school is located had become increasingly Negro, and as a result "racist" rumors and social unrest had spread in the community. The major emphasis of the program is on the orientation of the teachers to provide them with insights into their students and community. For the problems the teachers cannot handle there are school counselors. Paddling is used as a disciplinary measure when there is severe cause. The general reactions of the teachers, parents, and students are favorable to the school and the program. At present, the school has the best junior high school attendance record in the city and has reduced both dropout and tardiness rates. Although there is little after-school white-Negro socializing among the students, there does not appear to be any racial animosity. (LB)

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A SCHOOLMAN JOINS WEST END'S QUEST FOR AN IMAGE

By Jim Morrissey

What do you do if you're a school principal in a metropolitan area that suddenly changes complexion?

The "West End" of Louisville, Ky., is such an area. In the past five years particularly, Negroes by the thousands moved to this once predominantly white section, and with the movement came social maladjustment, rumor, unrest and fear.

Every city has a "West End," characterized by the same complex problems and involving millions of Negroes and whites in nationwide total.

What's to be done? If you're Dawson Orman you agonize over the problems, sweat to find solutions, strain to change attitudes, and you lose a lot of sleep. A word of caution: Watch it when you talk "West End" with Orman. He's in what is ordinarily considered a noncombatant job—principal of Louisville's Shawnee Junior High School—but it would be a grievous mistake to think he won't fight for the people of his adopted community.

Orman represents a vigorous vanguard of West End defenders—educators, businessmen, churchmen and deeply concerned residents—all engaged in changing the West End image. Their purpose is to dispel false rumor and gossip concerning their section of Louisville. Their high-caliber weapons are pride and progress. Their efforts are not unique. Across the nation in all urban centers, the same problem of blanket indictment by area exists.

"We have had substitute teachers practically shaking with fear because they had heard all sorts of things about our school," Orman says. "Some actually thought Shawnee students fought in the halls, carried knives, attacked teachers."

The 38-year-old principal continues: "I received a telephone call from a man who said, 'I know five or six Shawnee girls carry razor blades in their hair.' The implication was that these girls would whip out razor blades at the slightest provocation and attack anyone."

Another time, a fight between two boys—one white, the other Negro—"became a race riot." The principal says: "Actually, our racial problems have been negligible. Our enrollment is 1,500—the largest junior high in the state—and 63.5 per cent of our student body is Negro. Yet, all of last school year and so far this year, we haven't had a single problem that could be attributed to racial conflict."

What the image-changers face is a decades-long indictment that West End natives trace to the 1920's. Pockets of poverty that bred crimes of violence and vandalism were the first seeds. When these problems were discussed, the trouble sections were described loosely as "down in the West End." So down through the years the entire section had the blight of rumor stamped on it.

The movement of Negro families from downtown Louisville to formerly all-white West End areas quickened the racist rumor pace Many used rumor to "make true" what in fact hadn't taken place—race rioting, rape, white-Negro intermixing, crimes of violence. The race rumoring added to the already heavy burden of the native West Enders.

West End problems and their consequences are very real to Dawson Orman. He lived there and attended Shawnee Junior High. His wife is a native West Ender (and salutatorian of her Shawnee High graduating class).

"I felt the place to start changing the image was in school," explains Orman. He reasoned that students needed to develop pride in themselves, pride in their school and pride in the West End.

With approval of the city school administration, a concentrated effort began in September, 1965, when Orman took over as Shawnee Junior High principal. He's vigorous, conscientious and looks in as good shape (6 feet, 195 pounds) as he was captaining the Louisville Male High football team in 1945. This combination of youth and vigor appeals to students who by and large consider him "regular" and "understanding."

Orman, who was assistant principal at Shawnee three years before taking over the top job, has an energetic project teammate in Assistant Principal Miss Mary Lou Baker, who has been at Shawnee 16 years.

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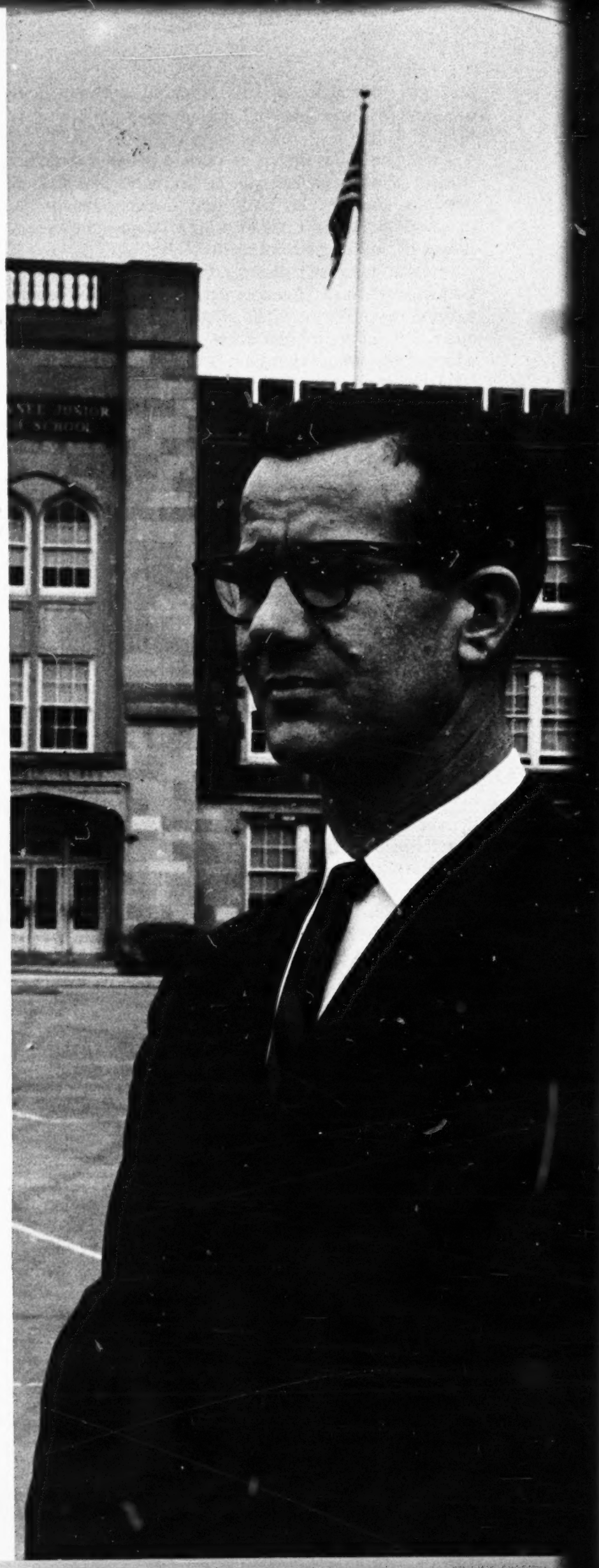
Dawson Orman represents a vanguard of Louisvillians working vigorously to improve the image of their West End area.



They have inoculated the faculty with their goals and their enthusiasm.

"We started with orientation meetings with the teachers once a week for the first five weeks," Miss Baker explains. "Mr. Orman and I told them about the youngsters they were teaching. We suggested ways of handling specific problems. And we gave tips and hints about this community and the people who live here."

Additional counsel came from faculty members who live in the West End "by choice." Fifteen of Shawnee's 65 teachers are West End residents.

The first principals' session with the teachers was a pep talk. Orman and Miss Baker explained their overall aims. They tried to project the "feeling" they wanted to instill in both teachers and students. They talked, too, about the danger of "lack of warmth that is often found in a big school."

Other sessions covered:

- *Guidance and counseling.* Counselors are available to handle student problems that are beyond the teachers' scope, but they are *not* to be used to handle discipline problems. If counselors mete out discipline, this breaks down the confidence students have in the counselors, and they can't be effective, Orman explains.
- *Disciplinary procedures.* Corporal punishment (paddling) is employed, but only for severe cause and only in the presence of the principal or the assistant principal. Smoking in school draws an automatic suspension, and parents of suspended students must meet with Orman or Miss Baker before the student is reinstated.
- *Academic offerings and ability groupings.* Students entering the junior high are grouped by ability, but after a year there they are grouped again. Orman doesn't want students pigeon-holed at an age when they can develop rapidly. "The idea is for each boy ▶

and girl to reach his full potential without being hindered by preconceived notions about his ability," he says.

• *Extra-curricular activities.* Orman believes that each student should participate in as many activities as possible. Further, he feels that active participation in sports—either as a player or as a fan—is an excellent means of building school spirit.

Integration wasn't discussed at the faculty sessions. Orman explains: "Acceptance of integration comes natural now. We have 18 Negro teachers and, obviously, it is not a problem for us." The way the teachers adopted the image-changing project has been particularly heartening to Orman and Miss Baker.

"Students asked for an after-school study hour because they had no place at home to work," Orman reports. "We asked for teachers to volunteer supervising these sessions and got more teachers than we needed. Physical education teachers gave up their lunch period to conduct intramural sports programs for both boys and girls, because they believe, as I do, a strong sports program is essential to developing school spirit and school pride."

The principal adds: "Also, we have tried to get interesting assembly programs. We let the students know what's going on in the school. And we try to include as many students as possible in everything that's going on."

One teacher summarized the cause of continuing teacher enthusiasm: "We learned to like the kids and to recognize their deep need to be proud of something."

Teachers interviewed were high in their praise of Orman and Miss Baker. One explained: "We're treated as responsible individuals. There has to be an experimental atmosphere in a school like this, and there has to be a camaraderie between teachers and administrators if we are to succeed. We certainly have that."

The ways of social change are subtle at best, and the signs of success often go undetected. So the image changers should be forgiven occasional moments of discouragement, those trying times when they see themselves as Don Quixotes tilting at windmills.

But there are encouraging signs of change at Shawnee: the school has the best attendance record of any junior high in the city—95 per cent. Tardiness has been cut in half the past two school years. Shawnee is third best among junior highs in least number of dropouts, and this is an area that turns out comparatively few youngsters who go on to college.

The State Department of Education ranks the school as "standard." This is the median category of academic achievement. Shawnee also ranks median among Louisville junior highs in all subjects except science and mathematics, courses in which Shawnee is rated "above average." The curriculum has not been changed in any way to adjust to the image-changing program. The school is strong in industrial arts and home economics, but it is not by any means a vocational-training junior high. The Shawnee overall IQ is 98, the same as the median for the entire city school system.

Besides the Shawnee Junior High improvement, there are other indicators down in the West End that are even more encouraging.

If the area is to find the pride and progress sought by educators and community leaders, there must first be racial harmony. Interviews with some 200 West Enders—students, workmen, housewives, businessmen—provided ample evidence of a significant improvement in tolerance.

"You have to live here to appreciate what's happened," a grocer said. "I bought this store three years ago. Then, white people wouldn't go out at night. They were afraid of what might happen to them. There was all kinds of vicious talk. People are relaxed now. Three years ago there was no point in keeping the store open at night. Nobody came in. Now, they do."

A teacher reported: "Three years ago, a Negro substitute teacher was sent to one of the elementary schools down here. She sat down in the classroom and all the white students walked out. Today, Negro substitute teachers go to the same school and the white children stay in class."

Students interviewed gave no indication of racial animosity. In fact, they were quick to deny that whites and Negroes have "skin color troubles," even though there is little white-Negro socializing after school hours.

A Shawnee Junior High Negro student commented: "I'm proud of my school." Asked why, he answered: "It's the largest junior high in the State of Kentucky and because the white and colored get along." This boy's buddy added: "Mr. Orman's strict, but he builds up school spirit. He'll give you a paddlin', but you got it coming when he does."

A white Shawnee Senior High student announced proudly that he has many Negro friends: "They made me an 'honorary black,' took me right into the tribe."

One mother said she and her husband thought seriously of sending their 11-year-old daughter to a private school because they feared "the colored would make bad remarks to her." The girl refused to change schools; she wouldn't leave her classmates. The mother reported happily: "There have been no remarks. Everything's fine."

The students' attitudes are significant because they will comprise the next generation of West End adults, and they—not their parents, who are far more inflexible—will set the eventual social temper of that section of Louisville.

All of this should not be taken to mean the West End is "home free." The fact that a West End Community Council was formed and is functioning is evidence that much more needs to be done.

Dawson Orman makes no effort to minimize Shawnee Junior High's problems or those of the community as a whole. He's too much of a realist for that. "We have big problems, but they are about the same as other schools have all over the country—slow learners, discipline, overcrowding, faculty shortages." ○